

Chapter VI: Consultation and Coordination

Introduction

This chapter describes the history of public involvement leading up to and during development of the *Final Yosemite Fire Management Plan/EIS*. Public participation in the planning process helps to ensure that the National Park Service fully understands and considers the public's interest. Through public involvement, the National Park Service shared information about the planning process, issues, and proposed actions. In turn, the planning teams were informed of the concerns and values of those groups and individuals who participated in the process. Also as part of the public involvement and in compliance with laws and regulations, management agencies and other public constituencies were consulted. Chapter 6 describes these consultations and their results. With the help of the public's involvement, the National Park Service is able to make better informed decisions and improved plans.

Public and agency participation throughout the planning process allowed the planning team to:

- Analyze and incorporate comments from previous planning efforts
- Collect scoping comments to help define the range of issues to be addressed
- Provide opportunities for the public to obtain the knowledge necessary to make informed comments
- Collect public, American Indian, and agency comments on the *Final Yosemite Fire Management Plan/EIS*
- Consult with other management agencies
- Produce the best possible plan

Public and agency participation in the planning process will not end with the *Final Yosemite Fire Management Plan/EIS*, but will continue throughout the implementation phases of the plan.

Public Scoping

Public scoping is part of the National Environmental Policy Act process (40 CFR 1501.7) for preparing an environmental impact statement. Scoping helps determine the range of issues and opportunities to be used in developing the alternatives and their attributes, and for assessing their environmental effects. The process used during public scoping, and in additional consultation and coordination for the *Draft Yosemite Fire Management Plan/Environmental Impact Statement* is described below.

In November 1998, the National Park Service issued new directions for wildland fire management in national parks. In early 1999, the Fire Management Office at Yosemite National Park sent a letter to individuals, organizations, and agency and government offices on the park's planning activity mailing list. This letter invited recipients to assist in identifying fire management issues and opportunities. There were 26 letters, faxes, and emails received during this scoping period. The described 41 separate concerns.

In January 2001, following the fire season of 2000 during which many homes and structures across the country were destroyed, a *Report to the President* was prepared and a new Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy was released. The new policy was a revision and update of the December 1995 Final Report of the Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy and Program Review. This document was accepted by the Secretaries of Interior and Agriculture. It endorsed the older policy and strengthened the principles, policies, and recommendations of the 1995 report. A National Fire Plan was also introduced and approved. This national plan directed the National Park Service to expedite the removal of hazardous fuels from wildland/urban interface areas to provide immediate protection of natural and cultural resources, physical property, and facilities, both federal and private.

As a result of the national direction and the issues raised by the Yosemite public during scoping in 1999, a Notice of Intent to prepare an environmental impact statement (EIS) was prepared and published in the Federal Register on March 20, 2001. Letters were again sent to individuals, organizations, and government representatives. The Notice of Intent invited the public to help identify fire management issues and concerns, a suitable range of alternatives and appropriate mitigating measures, and the nature and extent of potential environmental impacts to be addressed in the EIS. Comments were received through April 30, 2001. An open house was also held on April 10, 2001, in Yosemite Valley.

During the public scoping period, 93 letters, faxes, and emails describing 68 separate concerns were received. These concerns are listed under *Issues and Concerns Used to Develop the Alternatives*, in *Chapter 1, Purpose and Need*.

Public Comment Period

The *Draft Yosemite Fire Management Plan/Environmental Impact Statement* was mailed to over 800 interested federal, state, local, and Indian tribal agencies and members of the public on May 10, 2002; it was also posted on the park website. A Notice of Availability for the Draft EIS was published in the Federal Register on June 18, 2002 (Vol. 67, No 117, page 41444). On June 28, the Environmental Protection Agency published their announcement of environmental impact statements officially filed (Federal Register/Vol. 67, No. 125, page 43597), and established the end of the public comment period as August 27, 2002. A press release concerning the comment period's opening and closing was widely distributed on July 1, 2003.

In order to facilitate public review and comment on the *Draft Yosemite Fire Management Plan/EIS*, public open house meetings were held in July 2002, in Oakhurst, Mariposa, Sonora, and Mammoth Lakes, and on three occasions (in June, July and August) in Yosemite Valley; field trips were scheduled to coincide with the Yosemite Valley open houses. At the beginning of the public comment period, and prior to each open house, the National Park Service advertised that comments would be received through August 27, 2002. This advertising included press releases and notification on the Yosemite National Park web site. For open houses, topical information sheets were prepared and handed out to the public.

The National Park Service received 143 written comment letters by mail, email, fax, and at public meetings. All comment letters were read and analyzed by members of the Fire Management Planning Team. These letters contained 753 discreet comments, which were grouped into 202

concerns. Responses to comments are found in Appendix 12. All comments letters are preserved in the administrative record.

Approximately 46 people attended the public open house meetings in Mammoth Lakes, Mariposa, Oakhurst, Sonora, and Yosemite Valley during the public comment period. Another 10 people participated in Fire Management Plan-related field trips that were conducted for the public.

Organizations and Agencies Consulted

March 15, 2001. Meeting with representatives of the American Indian Council of Mariposa County (Southern Sierra Miwok) at the Mariposa Library. Discussed issues and concerns, including traditional cultural areas, gathering areas, archeological resources, fire suppression activities, fire crew development, the Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy, and the development of the *Yosemite Fire Management Plan*.

March 26 to April 10, 2001. During a two-week period prior to the public scoping session in Yosemite Valley, telephonic contacts were made to representatives of environmental organizations, including the Wilderness Society, National Parks and Conservation Association, Natural Resources Defense Council, Central Sierra Environmental Resource Center, and the Sierra Club. The Director of the Mariposa County Planning Department and the Mariposa County Supervisors with responsibility for effected communities (considered as wildland/urban interface under the plan) were also contacted. The planning process and various fire management treatments for accomplishing resource management objectives were discussed.

April 5, 2001. Park representatives met with North Fork Mono Rancheria in a general consultation meeting. Discussion included the fire management plan as well as the specific actions for calendar year 2001 burns and thinning projects.

April 7, 2001. Meeting with Wawona Town Planning Advisory Committee, at the Wawona Community Center. Eleven people attended. Information was provided on the Yosemite Fire Management Plan scoping meeting, the Wildland/Urban Interface Initiative, the National Fire Plan, and Wawona-specific fire management options. The group expressed concerns about fire protection, structural fire capabilities, and the need to remove some of the trees in Wawona for fire protection. The group was supportive of proactive fire management projects.

April 18, 2001. Meeting with El Portal Town Planning Advisory Committee to share information on the fire management plan revision, the Wildland/Urban Interface Initiative, the National Fire Plan, and El Portal-specific fire management options. Nine people attended. The group articulated concerns about fire protection and smoke and were supportive of proactive fire management projects. The group also expressed concerns about non-native plant invasion due to fire management activities and some concern for Yosemite West and a cohesive plan with the U.S. Forest Service.

April 25, 2001. Correspondence sent by park to all associated American Indian groups, concerning projects at Yosemite National Park, including the fire management plan, and informing them of National Park Service interest in seeking consultation.

April 28, 2001. Meeting with Wawona Area Property Owners Association, at the Wawona Community Center. Over 30 people attended. Information was shared on the Yosemite Fire Management Plan revision, the Wildland/Urban Interface Initiative, the National Fire Plan, and Wawona-specific fire management options. The group articulated concerns about fire protection. They were supportive of fire management projects and of housing fire personnel and offices in Wawona. Discussion also included fire history and a possible missing fire record from the 1950's. They also brought up the need for another road bridge across the Merced River, on the east end of town (beyond the scope of the fire management plan).

April, 28, 2001. Meeting with Foresta Association, at the Eisenstein Home. A presentation was given on the development of the fire management plan. Issues discussed included placement of a fire crew, the wildland/urban interface, and various fuel treatments including mechanical and hand thinning, fuel breaks, and the A-Rock Fire.

May 1, 2001. Meeting of the California Central Province Fire Management Officers (Stanislaus, Sierra, Sequoia, and Inyo National Forests; Bakersfield Bureau of Land Management District; Sequoia National Park; and Yosemite National Park). Held at Sierra National Forest Supervisor's Office, in Clovis, CA. Yosemite Fire Management Officer met and explained the process for developing the *Yosemite Fire Management Plan*.

April 23, 2001. Letter to Mariposa County Air Pollution Control Officer, requesting response from the county as to its information needs regarding smoke management planning, data, mitigations, and other actions, with respect to Yosemite fire management activities. Response received.

April 23, 2001. Letter to Tuolumne County Air Pollution Control Officer, requesting response from the county as to its information needs regarding smoke management planning, data, mitigations, and other actions, with respect to Yosemite fire management activities. Response received dated April 27, 2001.

June 4 to June 11, 2001. Consultation meetings with American Indian Council of Mariposa County (Southern Sierra Miwok) (6/4) and North Fork Mono Rancheria (6/11). Telephone consultation with Mono Lake Indian Community (6/5). Written response from Bridgeport Indian Colony. Tuolumne Rancheria informed the National Park Service that Bill Leonard of American Indian Council of Mariposa County will take the lead for them as well. Discussion included *Yosemite Fire Management Plan* as well as the specific actions for calendar year 2001 burns and thinning projects.

July 9, 2001. Phone conversation with Samuel Elizondo, Environmental Specialist for Picayune Rancheria, Chukchansi Tribe. Discussed items on the project list/agenda from the 3/15/2001 meeting with American Indian Council of Mariposa County.

July 16 and 17, 2001. In separate meetings, park representatives met with the Bishop Paiute Tribe and Mono Lake Indian Community to discuss park projects. On July 16, park staff consulted with the Bridgeport Indian Colony. At all three consultation meetings the *Yosemite Fire Management Plan* was discussed as was the 2001 burn activities in Yosemite National Park.

July 19, 2001. Interagency Smoke Council (IASC) at Point Reyes, CA. Park and regional staff presented information on the air quality analysis being used in the *Draft Yosemite Fire Management Plan/EIS*. Attending were representatives from federal, state, and private agencies conducting burns in California, as well as California Air Resources Board personnel and several Air Pollution

Control Districts (including San Joaquin Unified Air District). The presentation consisted of a fire history of Yosemite, discussion of tentative draft alternatives and potential emissions, a representative map of Smoke Sensitive Areas, and a solicitation of input when the *Draft Yosemite Fire Management Plan/EIS* becomes available.

August 11, 2001. Park representative met with the Sierra Nevada Alliance (of environmental organizations), at Yosemite National Park. Visited sites within the park, discussed past projects, and discussed concepts, including fire return interval departure analysis (FRID), passive and aggressive mechanical means for restoring forest stands, catastrophic fire, and air quality impacts.

October 18, 2001. Park representatives met with the Interagency Smoke Council to discuss changes to and implementation of burning regulations as they pertain to wildland fire. A presentation was given related to the Yosemite fire management program and the air quality analyses completed to prepare the *Draft Yosemite Fire Management Plan/EIS*. There was discussion of the Hoover Fire (of 2001), and the public information activities used to mitigate effects.

During the Comment Period for the Draft Yosemite Fire Management Plan/Environmental Impact Statement (in addition to public open houses/meetings):

August 9, 2002. Park representatives met with the Yosemite Concession Services employees, and presented information on the *Draft Fire Management Plan/ Environmental Impact Statement* and answered questions.

August 10, 2002. Park representatives met with the Wawona Town Planning Advisory Committee, and presented information on the *Draft Fire Management Plan/ Environmental Impact Statement*, wildland/urban interface and air quality, and answered questions.

August 12, 2002. Park representatives met with the El Portal Town Planning Advisory Committee, and presented information on the *Draft Fire Management Plan/Environmental Impact Statement*, wildland/urban interface and air quality, and answered questions.

August 16, 2002. Park representatives met with Tuolumne County Alliance for Resources and Environment (TuCARE), and presented information on the *Draft Fire Management Plan/Environmental Impact Statement*, wildland/urban interface and air quality, and answered questions.

August 19, 2002. Park representatives met with the Yosemite West Town Planning Advisory Committee, and presented information on the *Draft Fire Management Plan/Environmental Impact Statement*, wildland/urban interface and air quality, and answered questions.

August 21, 2002. Park representatives met with members of the public at the Yosemite Valley Open House, and presented information and answered questions about the *Draft Fire Management Plan/Environmental Impact Statement*, and answered questions. A member of Senator Diane Feinstein's staff attended.

Coordination

California State Historic Preservation Officer. The National Park Service conducted consultation with the California State Historic Preservation Officer and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation. This consultation was done according to the National Park Service's 1999 Programmatic Agreement for compliance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act. It included letters dated May 16, 2001 to the California State Historic Preservation Officer and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, advising them that the National Park Service was undertaking preparation of a new fire management plan and draft environmental impact statement. In May 2001, a copy of the *Draft Yosemite Fire Management Plan/EIS* was forwarded to the California Office of Historic Preservation. A letter dated February 28, 2003 was sent to the California State Historic Preservation Officer, requesting their review and comment, and offering to provide a briefing on modifications being considered as a result of public comment. On March 13, 2003, an informational copy of the *Draft Yosemite Fire Management Plan/EIS* was provided to the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation. Copies of letters requesting comments appear in Appendix 7; no responses were received.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended (16 USC 531 et seq.) requires all federal agencies to consult with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to ensure that any action authorized, funded, or carried out by the agency does not jeopardize the continued existence of listed species or critical habitat. The National Park Service contacted U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service representatives on March 5, 2001. After initial consultation, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service recommended to the National Park Service that a Biological Assessment be prepared for the *Draft Yosemite Fire Management Plan/EIS*. A Biological Assessment on the *Draft Yosemite Fire Management Plan/EIS* was submitted to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service on September 20, 2001 and was found in Appendix 11. The National Park Service requested that formal consultation be initiated with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

On November 19, 2002, planning team members and other staff met with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service representatives to discuss the *Final Yosemite Fire Management Plan/EIS* and the issuance of a Biological Opinion. In February, 2003, additional information related to Valley Elderberry Longhorn Beetle was submitted by letter to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. On May 14, 2003, Park staff provided additional information related to mitigation measures common to all action alternatives, including for wetlands, vegetation, wildlife conservation for special status species, including Mountain yellow-legged frog, Yosemite toad, California spotted owl, and Pacific fisher, and terms and conditions for listed species, including Valley Elderberry Longhorn Beetle. On July 29, 2003, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service mailed to the National Park Service its Formal Endangered Species Consultation on the Yosemite Fire Management Plan, Yosemite National Park, California (see Appendix 9).

U.S. Geological Survey. The expertise of the U.S. Geological Survey was used to evaluate fire ecology and fire return interval departures for Yosemite National Park. This information is included in the plan as part of the technical basis for the development of the alternatives. U.S. Geological Survey scientists were consulted again while analyzing issues raised by the public during the public comment period. U.S. Geological Survey scientists provided technical information that was added to Affected Environment, Chapter 3, and used to modify the alternatives and analysis in response to public comments.

National Park Service Water Resources Division. Executive Orders 11988, Floodplain Management, and 11990, Protection of Wetlands, direct federal agencies to enhance floodplain and wetland values, to avoid development in wetlands and floodplains whenever there is a practicable alternative, and to avoid impacts associated with the occupancy or modification of floodplains or wetlands to the extent possible. In consultation with the National Park Service Water Resources Division, it was concluded that Statements of Finding for floodplains and wetlands would not be needed for the *Draft Yosemite Fire Management Plan/EIS*.

Agencies and Organizations that Received Copies of the Final Yosemite Fire Management Plan/EIS

Federal Agencies and Members of Congress

Advisory Council on Historic Preservation
Bureau of Reclamation, Sacramento Office
Dept. of Defense, Army Corps of Engineers
Stanislaus National Forest, Groveland Ranger District
Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest
Inyo National Forest, Lee Vining Ranger District
Sierra National Forest, Minarets Ranger District
National Park Service
NPS- Air Resources Div
NPS- Denver Service Center
NPS Pacific West Region
NPS- Pacific Great Basin Support Office
NPS- Water Resources Div
Pacific Southwest Forest & Range Exp Station
United States Attorney's Office

Representative George Radanovich, US Congress
Senator Barbara Boxer, US Congress
Representative John T. Doolittle, US Congress
Representative George Miller, UC Congress
US Dept of Justice
US DOI, Bureau of Land Management, CA State Office, Folsom
US Environmental Protection Agency, Region IX
US Fish & Wildlife Service, Sacramento Regional Office
US Geological Survey, Menlo Park
USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service
USDOI Library
US Post Office, Yosemite National Park

State and Local Agencies

CA Dept of Fish & Game
CA Dept of Parks and Recreation
CA Native American Heritage Comm
CA State Clearinghouse
CA State Department of Justice
CA DOJ - Attorney General
CA State Resources Agency
CA State Senate
CA Air Resources Board
Caltrans
Council of Fresno County Governments
Office of Assemblyman Dave Cogdill
Eastern Madera Cnty Chamber of Commerce
El Portal Town Planning Adv Committee
Fish Camp Advisory Council
Fresno Cnty Board of Supervisors
Fresno Cnty Planning & Resource Mgmt
Groveland Community Services District
Madera County Planning Director

Madera County Board of Supervisors
Mariposa County Air Pollution Control District
Mariposa County Board of Supervisors
Mariposa County Planning Department
Mariposa County Sheriff
Mariposa County Unified School District
Mono County Board of Supervisors
Mono County Planning Dept
San Joaquin Air Pollution Control District
Stanislaus Council of Government
Stanislaus Cnty Env Review Committee
State Water Resources Control Board
Tuolumne County Air Pollution Control District
Tuolumne County Board of Supervisors
Tuolumne County Community Development
Tuolumne County Planning Commission
Tuolumne County Sheriff
Wawona Town Plan Advisory Comm

Indian Tribes

American Indian Council of Mariposa
CA Native American Heritage Comm
Madera County Chuckchansi Tribal Govt
Madera County North Fork Mono Indian Museum

Mono County Bridgeport Paiute Indian Colony
Mono County Mono Lake Indian Community
North Fork Rancheria
Tuolumne County Tuolumne Mewuk Tribal Cncl

Organizations

Acton - Agua Dulce Trails Council
American Alpine Club
American Hiking Society
American River Club
American Whitewater
Ansel Adams Gallery
Antelope Valley Press
Associated Press
Backcountry Horsemen of California
Biophilia Society
Bishop Chamber of Commerce
CA Trout Inc, Sierra Nevada Office
California Preservation Foundation
California Wilderness Coalition
Central Sierra Env Research Center
California Native Plant Society - Sequoia Chapter
Conservation Study Institute
CSU Stanislaus
Delaware North Corporation
Earth First! - Santa Cruz
Earth Island Institute
Earthjustice Legal Defense Fund
El Portal Homeowners Assn
El Portal Market
Environment & Natural Resources
Environment Now
Environmental Defense Fund
Fish Camp Property Owners Assn
Foothill Resources
Foresta Preservation Association
Fresno Chamber of Commerce
Friends of the Earth
Friends of the River/American Rivers
Friends of Yosemite Valley
Heritage Trails
Hetch Hetchy Water & Power
Highway 120 Association
Mammoth Lakes Chamber of Commerce
Mariposa Gazette
Mariposa Horse Association
Mariposa Tribune
Merced Irrigation District
Merced Sun Star
Mountain Light Photography
National Trust for Historic Preservation
Native Habitats
Natural Resources Council
Natural Resources Defense Council

Northcoast Environmental Center
National Parks Conserv Assn, National Office
Planning & Conservation League
Royal Robbins Inc
Save-the-Redwoods League
Saving Yosemite
Scotty's B&B/Cabin Rentals
SEIU Local 535
Sequoia Alliance
Sierra Club
Sierra Club Condor Group
Sierra Club Loma Prieta Chapter
Sierra Club Merced Group
Sierra Club National Office
Sierra Club Range of Light-Toiyabe Chapter
Sierra Club Tuolumne Group
Sierra Club Yosemite Committee
Sierra Star
Sonora Union Democrat
Soroptomist International of Groveland
The Access Fund
The Fresno Bee
The Modesto Bee
The Redwoods in Yosemite
The Trust for Public Land
Theroux Environmental
Tioga Lodge
TNC Weed Program
Wawona Area Property Owner's Association
Wild Earth Advocates
Wild Wilderness
Wilderness Society
Wilderness Watch
Wildlands Center for Preventing Roads
YA Board of Trustees
Yosemite Area Audubon
Yosemite Association
Yosemite Bug Hostel
Yosemite Campers Association
Yosemite Campers Coalition
Yosemite Concession Services
Yosemite Fund
Yosemite Guides
Yosemite Institute
Yosemite Mobilization Committee
Yosemite Motels
Yosemite Mountaineering School
Yosemite Partners GMP

Yosemite Pines
 Yosemite Restoration Trust
 Yosemite Sierra Visitors Bureau
 Yosemite Valley School
 Yosemite West Group
 Yosemite West Home Owners

Libraries

Alameda County Public Library
 Bassett Memorial Library
 Contra Costa County Library
 Columbia College Library
 CSU Fresno, Henry Madden Library
 Fresno Flats Historical Library, SHSA
 Los Angeles City Public Library
 Marin County Public Library
 Mariposa County Public Library
 Oakhurst Public Library
 Sacramento County Public Library
 Salazar Library, Sonoma State U
 San Bernardino Cnty Public Library
 San Francisco City Public Library
 San Jose City Public Library
 Santa Cruz County Library
 Stanford University Green Library
 Stanislaus County Library
 UC Berkeley Bancroft Library
 UC Davis Shields Library
 UCLA Maps & Govt Information Library
 UCLA Young Research Library
 Univ of CA Library Tech Services
 Yosemite Research Library

The complete list of individuals sent the *Final* and *Draft Yosemite Fire Management Plan/Environmental Impact Statement* is available from Yosemite National Park planning office.